Intro to PR

H2GY1K

LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

What PR is and when to use it

- **PR stands for Public (or Press) Relations**
- PR focuses on finding people who write about your industry and have large followings
- Getting press coverage is a great way of growing your business, and it's important to understand how press works
- Press doesn't only mean the newspapers, it can be anyone with an audience, like news sites, blogs, podcasts, or shows
- PR doesn't make sense for every business, and even if it does, you won't do PR efforts all the time
- **PR does not replace marketing, it supports it**
- When to try to get press coverage:
  #1 You have an awesome product
  #2 You want to reach specific media outlets
  #3 You have a social/non-profit angle to your business
  #4 You have other people who can dedicate themselves to this process (it's a lot of work)
  #5 You're okay with your efforts not working all the time

A day in the life of a reporter

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

What reporters do

- To you, press is free marketing, but to a reporter/writer, it only makes sense if it's an interesting story that their audience cares about
- A reporter might start their day with the following goals in mind:
  - creating new content
  - looking to attract more readers
  - thinking up new ideas
- Their product is their writing, so they're always in search for something to write about
- **Some reporters don't get a salary, they get paid by the page view**
- The life of a reporter involves:
  - writing & publishing
  - researching different topics
  - reviewing requests from people like you who want to get coverage
- Many reporters work for editors, who have to approve the articles before they're published

- Reporters can be lazy, looking for things that are easy to write about
- Your chances of being picked can increase if you approach them with an interesting story and if you make it easy for them to write the article about you

Common angles for getting press

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Finding a unique angle

- Reporters are always on the lookout for topics that are relevant to their audience and timely (they're interesting right now)
- A lot of times you will be competing with other people pitching the same idea to the same reporter
- What you can do to stand out is give them a unique angle for your idea. Common angles:

- **#1 "I'm special and unique"**
  - look for just one way in which your product/business is unique
  - maybe there is something unique in how you got to where you are today
- **#2 Tie your product/business into a trending topic**
- **#3 The opposing position**
  - think about what you do differently than other businesses
- **#4 Consider a tactic you use and what would happen if everyone else adopted it**
- **#5 Identify a global trend, apply it to your business, and offer the story as a lesson**

Basing your angle off outlet and person

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Doing your research

- Each of the reporters and outlets out there have their own style, so you have to get to know them first
- Make sure the outlet you're trying to reach has previously published articles about your topic/industry
- Each outlet is going to have a specific brand personality, which reflects in the subjects it covers
- When targeting a specific reporter, read a lot of what they published to see if their style is a good match for you
- Notice the format of the articles - maybe your subject is not a good fit for a long form post, for example
- Writers have just as many angles as your story does - they want something that fits well with their style and interests

Pitching vs. press releases

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

The old vs. new way of getting coverage

- Press releases are the traditional way of getting coverage for your company
- You hire a press agency who works with you to write an official press release that includes things like your company mission and product description
- The agency sends out the release through its official channels to newspapers and magazines
- **Nowadays, press releases are mainly used by large companies when something important happens in the company, like hiring a new CEO**
- Press releases are pre-written stories, which makes everything easier for the reporters
- However, the old methods don't work as well anymore, because:
  - anyone can publish content online now
  - official press releases are boring
  - traditional press releases are written from one point of view, they just communicate facts
  - press releases are an outbound effort - you can't just throw something out there and hope that someone will cover it

- **Today, in order to get coverage you have to find people with big audiences and reach out to them with a pitch (usually through an email)**
- You still have to prepare the information yourself, but you have to adapt it to each person's audience
- If your pitch is relevant to the reporter/outlet, you have a better chance of getting covered

Core concepts in getting press

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

PR concepts you need to know

- Before you get out there trying to pitch reporters, there are 4 concepts you need to know

- **#1 Laddering up**

  - first, you have to get coverage in smaller and less popular blogs
  - after that, you can use that as validation to pitch yourself to medium and larger outlets
  - the most popular outlets often look at the smaller ones to find good topics

- **#2 Press embargoes**

  - an embargo is when you set a specific time or date for outlets to cover your company and they're not allowed to do it before that
  - this works when you're launching something on a specific date, for example
  - it allows you to get more coverage

- **#3 Exclusive**

  - if you're doing an exclusive, you're pitching your story to just one outlet/reporter and offer them the opportunity to be the only ones who cover it

- it makes your offer more enticing
- if the first outlet refuses it, you can just go to the next one with the same offer

- **#4 “On spec” writing**

  - you can write the whole article for the reporters instead of just pitching your idea
  - “on spec” means on speculation, because you’re hoping that the article fits their style or the outlet they’re writing for
  - bigger outlets will expect on spec writing if you haven’t written for them before
  - write only one good article and just tweak it for every outlet you reach out to

Step 1: Finding journalists

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Finding the right reporters

- Keep yourself up to date with your industry by reading the newest articles from popular or smaller outlets
- **Make sure you know what's happening in your industry and who writes about it**
- Search and then list out the most popular outlets in your industry, follow them on social media or subscribe to their email newsletter
- Check out alltop.com, which combines all the top blogs and outlets on a given subject
- When you find articles that you like and are relevant to your business, look at the name of the reporter
- **You have a better chance at being noticed if you pitch the writer instead of the outlet**
- List out the reporters who write about products like yours
- Find them on Twitter and contact them
- You can use tools like BuzzStream or JustReachOut to save time when looking for reporters in your industry

Tip: Use helpareporter.com

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Helping reporters out

- **There is a website called HARO - Help a Reporter Out (helpareporter.com)**
- Reporters and outlets are always looking for reliable sources for their material
- You can look at the list of requests for sources and pitch yourself as an expert on your topic
- **You can get a quote, a paragraph, or just a mention in an article, but it's a great way to get exposure in big outlets**
- If you're a registered user on the website, you will get daily emails with topics you can contribute to
- The requests usually require a quick response, so be prepared to make quick decisions

Step 2: Researching & compiling interests of journalists

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Getting to know the reporters

- After listing out the reporters' names, do some research about them by reading more of their articles
- **If you get to know them better, you can adjust your pitch to increase your chances of getting covered**
- List out the topics they usually write about and make note of the articles that are the closest to what you want
- Search for them on Google and check out their social feeds to see what they share and what they think
- See what they say about themselves in their bio, what they like, where they live, etc.
- The ultimate goal is to get their attention, but this process takes time and you have to be patient

Step 3: Getting the attention of journalists

H2GY1K

LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Getting under the reporters' radar

- In order to get the attention of a journalist, it helps if they know who you are or they've heard your name before
- **Make contact with them gradually, long before you pitch them something**
  - #1 Connect with them on social media
  - #2 Engage directly with them, ask questions or provide answers, try to be helpful when they need something
  - #3 Participate in webinars and Twitter chats where they participate as well
- Being actively involved in all these events has other benefits as well: you might learn new things, network with other people in your industry, share ideas, etc.

Tactic: Quora pull-in

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Using Quora to get reporters' attention

- Quora and Reddit are great places where you can help reporters out, answer their questions, and provide different sources for them

- **The Quora tactic:**
  - find a question that relates to your industry/product and answer it the best you can without turning it into a pitch of your product
  - ask the reporter to check out the question and give feedback as an expert on the topic

- How to invite them:
  - email
  - Quora's "ask to answer" feature

- Why this works:
  - you're complimenting them on their expertise
  - you're bringing something relevant to them
  - you're offering them a chance to get exposure

- The advantages of using this tactic:
  - you connect with a source directly
  - maybe you get a quote from them
  - you write a post with their quote, post it, and link to them
  - it makes it easier to contact them again down the road because they know who you are

Tactic: Doing research & polling for journalists

H2GY1K

LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Helping reporters by doing research

- One way to help a reporter is to do research on relevant topics for them
- Figure out what data you want to share with them
- **You can create a survey and show them the results (20-50 responses is enough)**
- Use SurveyMonkey, Google Surveys, or other tools
- **Ask for stories and feedback from people in your industry**
- You can use your research just to get their attention or you can include it in your pitch email as a way to be helpful

Step 4: Pitching and writing the email (1)

H2GY1K

LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Finding reporters' email addresses

- In order to pitch reporters, you're going to need their email addresses
- Email is the best way to pitch someone
- Not everybody will post their email address publicly, so you might have to do some email hunting
- **Most email addresses follow the same pattern: firstname.lastname@emailprovider.com**
- You can take their first and last name and permutate them manually in different ways until you get a list of potential email addresses
- When you send the email, put one of the addresses in the To: box and the other ones in the Bcc: box
- It's not considered spam unless you send thousands of emails
- **There are tools out there that will make finding email addresses easier for you:**
  - Email Permutator by Metric Sparrow
  - Hunter.io (it installs a browser plugin)
  - Voila Norbert
- If you've made contact with a reporter before, you can just politely ask for their email address

Step 4: Pitching and writing the email (2)

H2GY1K

LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Writing the email

- Reporters are busy, so you've got limited time to make an impression with your email
- You have to choose your words carefully and grab their attention immediately, starting with the email subject line
- **Tips for writing a strong subject line:**
  - personalize it by using their name or mentioning something they wrote
  - create curiosity by mentioning something that leads them to open the email
  - "limited time offer" - add the word "exclusive" to the subject line
- In the body of the email, elaborate on the subject line immediately
- If you mention one of their articles, say what exactly you liked so they know you've actually read it
- **Explain how your product/business links to whatever you mentioned and clearly state the value it offers to them and their readers**

- If you don’t mention why this is relevant to them quickly, they might not read the whole email
- Be polite and friendly, but not overly friendly unless you've actually met them
- Be confident in your pitch and excited about it, but write it with the reporter’s audience in mind

Preparing a press package

H2GY1K

LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

What press packages are

- In order to write about you, a reporter needs all the information about your business, your product, who you are, etc.
- **A press package is a document you put together to include all this information**
- Nowadays, press packages might include pictures of you and your employees, product demo videos, logos, and other relevant media
- Putting together a press package saves you time because you can give the same thing to everyone
- Another advantage is that you make sure everyone sees the right stuff that you want them to see
- It also saves reporters time because they don't have to do any extra research

Closing thoughts & comments on PR

H2GY1K

LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

The main takeaways from this section

- **#1 Get to know the people before you pitch them**
- **#2 Get in the habit of being helpful to reporters on social media and other platforms**
  - You can become a source or an influencer just by participating with advice and solutions
- **#3 Keep your pitches short and personalized**
- **#4 None of your PR efforts is going to work 100% of the time**
  - You have to practice and gain more experience if you want to do it yourself
  - Alternatively, you can hire a PR agency, but it will be expensive
  - PR agencies don't guarantee you'll get coverage, they just have more contacts and more experience
  - Talk to the agencies' other clients to see which one is a good fit for you